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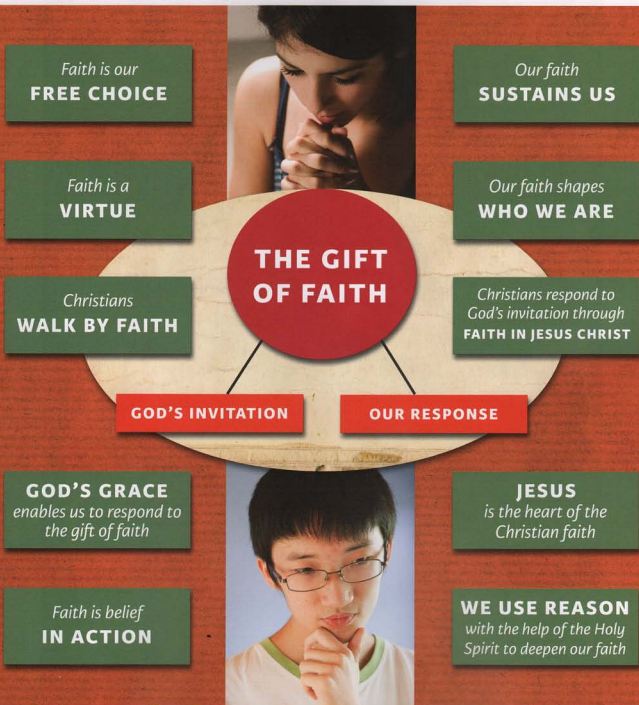
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The Obedience of Faith

—Our Response to God's Invitation



FAITH IS OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S INVITATION TO KNOW and believe in him. In this chapter we explore the obedience of faith. We look at the teaching of the Catholic Church on faith from two perspectives: faith as a human virtue and faith as a supernatural gift and Theological Virtue. The supernatural gift and Theological Virtue of faith 'is both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God (who invites his or her response) and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed' (*United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* [USCCA], 512).

FAITH IS

**A SUPERNATURAL GIFT
FROM GOD**

**A FREE RESPONSE
TO GOD**

**NECESSARY FOR
SALVATION**

CHRISTIAN LIVING INVOLVES:

HANDS

HEAD

HEART

Faith Focus: These teachings of the Catholic Church are the primary focus of the doctrinal content of this chapter:

- ⊙ Faith in God is both a supernatural gift from God and a free response of the person to God.
- ⊙ Faith is necessary for salvation.
- ⊙ Faith is a personal adherence of the whole person to God. It involves the assent of the intellect and will to the self-Revelation of God made through his deeds and words.
- ⊙ Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal. Faith leads us to prefer anything to him nor to substitute anything for him.
- ⊙ Believing is an act of the Church. The Church's faith precedes, engenders, supports and nourishes our faith.
- ⊙ Faith involves active participation in the Church community and working to spread the Faith by word and example.
- ⊙ Faith in Jesus Christ leads to discipleship and has practical implications for daily life and one's relationship with Christ.

Discipleship Formation: As a result of studying this chapter and discovering the meaning of the faith of the Catholic Church for your life, you should be better able to:

- ⊙ come to a deepened awareness of the presence of God in your life;
- ⊙ value faith as both a gift from God and a free response to him;
- ⊙ live an active faith of the 'head', 'heart' and 'hands';
- ⊙ by living your faith daily, deepen your relationship with God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Scripture References: These Scripture references are quoted or referred to in this chapter:

OLD TESTAMENT: Psalms 40:5, 119:160, 146:3–4; Isaiah 7:9; Jeremiah 17:5–6

NEW TESTAMENT: Matthew 5:1–7:29, 6:19–21, 7:7–11, 21, 24–29, 10:34–39, 11:25–27, 16:17, 22:37; Mark 1:11 and 35, 6:46, 12:30; Luke 4:18–19, 5:16, 10:27, 11:5–13, 18:1–8, 19:1–10, 24:13–33; John 14:1 and 26, 16:5–11; Romans 1:5, 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:12–26; 2 Corinthians 5:7; James 2:20

Faith Glossary: Familiarize yourself with the meaning of these key faith terms. Definitions are found in the Glossary: **Body of Christ, charity (love), clergy, consecrated life, Exile (The), faith, free will, grace, Holy Trinity, hope, human person, intellect, Liturgy, Liturgy of the Hours, Liturgy of the Word, Mass, Messiah, moral passions, prayer, Sacraments, Sermon on the Mount, Theological Virtues, theology, Twelve (the), Works of Mercy, worship**

Faith Word: faith

Learn by Heart: Romans 10:17

Learn by Example: Birute, a missionary catechist

Why faith?

In June 2009 the *New York Times* asked the question 'What is faith?' Over a thousand people replied. Here are four of those responses:

- ⊙ Faith is described in the Bible as 'the assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen'.
- ⊙ Faith is acting on the belief that what one does makes a difference.
- ⊙ Faith is the absence of fear.
- ⊙ Faith is choosing to believe that which is (for now) unproven.

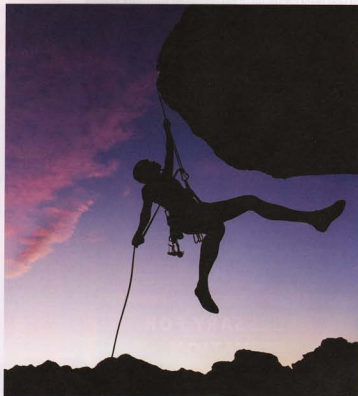
REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- ⊙ Is there anything missing from the above descriptions of faith? Explain.
- ⊙ How do you answer the question 'What is faith?'?
- ⊙ What is at the heart of Christian faith? Give reasons for your answer.

FAITH IS A HUMAN CHARACTERISTIC . . . AND MORE

In chapter 1 we explored the human desire for happiness. This desire is a touch of immortality and it reflects God's own desire for us to live in friendship with him both in the here and now and in the life everlasting after our death. What is the connection between this desire and the virtue of faith?

Faith is a universal characteristic of the **human person**. Faith impacts greatly our decisions to do what is good and our ability to trust. Faith shapes our lives, our choices, our relationships and our commitments. People of 'faith' have come to know and believe in the goodness of God, of people and of life. They live the conviction that life is meaningful; life has a good purpose.



Faith is a human virtue and a **Theological Virtue**. The human virtue of faith is the firm willingness and habit to do what is good. We acquire and grow in the human virtue of faith, as we do all human virtues, through human effort and God's grace. Faith is also one of the three Theological Virtues. The three Theological Virtues are gifts 'infused by God into the souls of the faithful to make them capable of acting as his children and of meriting eternal life' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC], no. 1813). The Theological Virtues are **faith, hope and charity** (love).

The human virtue of faith: Have you ever heard or said, 'But I believed in you! I had faith in you!' 'Faith' plays an important role in every person's

HEAR THE STORY

life. For example, most people acknowledge that they 'have faith in' the goodness of creation and people, and they act on that faith! They build caring and loving relationships because they have 'faith' in another person or in a group of people. Such human faith is sometimes betrayed, and when it is, that betrayal may negatively impact on our ability to grow as a person of faith. Why is that? Human faith is placed in other people and in ourselves, who are very fallible and can betray that faith. For instance, if we have been deeply hurt in the past by a parent or friend in whom we had placed our 'faith', this experience can negatively impact not only our faith in other people but also our ability to respond to God's invitation to believe in him and have faith in him.

The Theological Virtue of faith—a grace and a human act: The Theological Virtue of faith is radically different from the human virtue of faith. This Theological Virtue, which invites us to respond to God, who can neither deceive nor be deceived, is a 'supernatural' gift.

Faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time and inseparably, it is

a free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed.... Christian faith differs from our faith in any human person. It is right and just to entrust oneself wholly to God and to believe absolutely what he says. It would be futile and false to place such faith in a creature [see Jeremiah 17:5–6; Psalms 40:5, 146:3–4].

—CCC, no. 150

Faith is a gift, or **grace**. God's grace 'precedes, prepares, and elicits our free response in faith and commitment' (USCCA, 514). Believing is possible only by the grace of the Holy Spirit. While faith is above and beyond our human power to acquire on our own, the response of faith is an authentically human act. God's grace does not take away our freedom to choose to accept or not to accept his invitation to come to know and believe in him. The Theological Virtue of faith both gives us and strengthens our ability to order our life toward God, as the First Commandment teaches. Faith in God is necessary for salvation. Faith in God leads us to turn to him alone as our first origin and our ultimate goal. The Theological Virtue of faith enables us to prefer him above anything or anyone.



JOURNAL EXERCISE

- ☉ Place yourself in the presence of God, who is always inviting you to faith and giving you the grace to respond.
- ☉ How does your attitude and behavior at home, in school or in your neighborhood reflect your faith in God?

FAITH IN THE HOLY TRINITY

Faith is not only a personal act. No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. Christians cannot believe and live a life of faith in God without the support of the Church. Catholics acknowledge this dimension of faith at the conclusion of the **Liturgy of the Word at Mass**. We stand and pray the Creed; we join with the Church and profess, 'I believe. . .'

FAITH WORD**Faith**

Faith 'is both a gift of God and a human act by which the believer gives personal adherence to God (who invites his or her response) and freely assents to the whole truth that God has revealed.'

—United States Catholic Catechism for Adults [USCCA], 512

In the Creed we profess faith in the **Holy Trinity**, the central mystery of the Christian faith and Christian life. We give our whole self—our mind, heart and will—to God, who revealed himself to be Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When St. Peter confessed his faith in Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus declared to him that this Revelation did not come 'from flesh and blood', but from 'my Father who is in heaven' (Matthew 16:17; see also 11:25–27). At the Last Supper Jesus promised, 'But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you' (John 14:26). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, who will help us remember and understand all that Jesus taught. The power and grace of the Holy Spirit opens our mind and heart, our intellect and will, to Divine Revelation, at whose center is Jesus Christ.

OVER TO YOU

- ☉ Search your heart. What three deep beliefs do you hold that flow from your faith in God?
- ☉ How might you allow the gift of faith to shape your attitude and behavior?



HEAR THE STORY

The response of faith

The Old Testament prophet Isaiah is an example of a person whose faith in God kept him going in very hard times. Isaiah lived during the **Exile**. The Exile was a time in the history of the Israelites when they were deported from their homeland and were living in a country governed by their conquerors. It was a time marked by a widespread lack of faith in God. During this time of crisis and challenge, God called Isaiah and sent him to his people to assure them of God's fidelity to them. Clinging to and giving witness to his own faith in the Lord God, Isaiah admonished and challenged the people, 'If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all' (Isaiah 7:9).

OPENING CONVERSATION

- Who do you know or have you learned about who remained strong in their faith in God during a difficult time in their life?
- Take a moment to ask yourself, 'How firm do I stand in my faith in God?' What evidence supports your response?
- How does your faith in God affect your attitude and your behavior?

CHRISTIANS 'WALK BY FAITH'

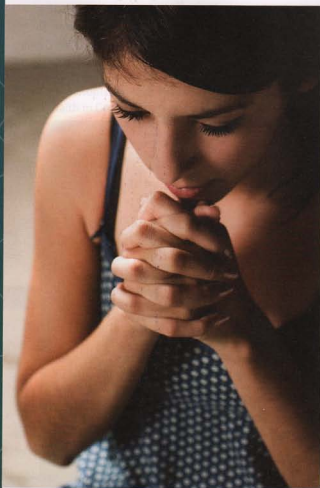
St. Paul taught, '[W]e walk by faith' (2 Corinthians 5:7). The faith life of a Christian is neither static nor fixed. The life of faith includes the lifelong choosing to make God the center of our life. It includes our continual choosing to keep God at the center of everything that we say and do. On one occasion Jesus clearly instructed his disciples that more was demanded of them than simply their claiming by their words to be his disciples. He said, 'Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord", will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 7:21). St. James would boldly remind the early Church of this teaching of Jesus. He wrote: '[F]aith without works is dead' (James 2:20). We are not only to believe in God; our



THE PROPHET ISAIAH | RAPHAEL

whole life is to bear witness to him. We must be hearers and doers of the Word. (Read Matthew 7:24–29.)

Like St. Paul, we live in a world where it can be difficult and risky to 'walk by faith', to be a person of faith. But that should not come as a surprise. Jesus clearly taught that there would be a cost to being a person who gives their heart, mind and will totally to God. (Read Matthew 10:34–39.) Yes, living a life of faith in God as a disciple of Jesus Christ is risky. But living such a life is vital to our existence. A life of faith in God shapes who we are and who we become. Our faith shapes everything about us!



TALK IT OVER

- ⊗ What does it mean to 'walk by faith'?
- ⊗ Share examples of challenges or obstacles to living your faith in God that you have encountered? How does that make walking by faith risky?

THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH

How do Christians walk by faith? We walk by faith by our willingness to believe and trust in all that God has communicated to us. We walk by faith when we believe and give witness to what Jesus taught us about the Triune God, about others and about ourselves. St. Paul taught '[F]aith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ' (Romans 10:17). Christian faith is about obeying (from the Latin *ob-audire*, meaning 'to hear, or listen to'). It means not only listening to but also responding

to the Word of God, Jesus Christ. We walk by faith when we match our longings for life, truth, freedom and joy—all the desires of our heart—to the way of life that Jesus Christ lived. This is another way of describing what St. Paul calls the 'obedience of faith' (Romans 1:5). To obey in faith is to submit freely to God, who is Love and Truth.

During the Rite of Baptism those who are to be baptized profess the faith of the Catholic Church into which they are about to be baptized. They renounce Satan and his works and they promise to live 'in the freedom of God's children'. After they are baptized, they are clothed in a white garment and given a candle lighted from the Easter candle, as the celebrant reminds them to 'walk always as children of the light . . . (and) keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts' so that 'when the Lord comes, may they go out to meet him with all the saints in the heavenly glory' (*Rite of Baptism for Children*, no. 127). Obeying the Word of God, revealed in Jesus Christ, is at the heart of the life of a Christian.

WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY?

- ⊗ How ready are you to hear, listen to and respond to the gift of faith in Christ?
- ⊗ How will your accepting the gift of faith affect your life?

FROM THE CATECHISM

'Faith seeks understanding' [St. Anselm]: it is intrinsic to faith that a believer desires to know better the One in whom he has put his faith, and to understand better what He has revealed; a more penetrating knowledge will in turn call forth a greater faith, increasingly set afire by love.

—CCC, no. 158

'FAITH SEEKS UNDERSTANDING'

At Baptism we are joined to Christ; we become adopted sons and daughters of the Father and temples of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the divine Teacher (see John 16:5–11), abides with us and gives us the grace to see more and more clearly what faith means for our life. The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to use our intellect and rigorous thinking to come to know God better and what God has revealed. The Holy Spirit, the

Spirit of Truth, assists us to use our **intellect** and our **free will** to embrace God and all that he has revealed.

The eyes of our heart need to be informed by the sharpness of our mind—by good study of Scripture and Tradition. This is exactly what your theology class invites you to do. **Theology** is ‘faith seeking understanding’. It is the study of God in which we use reason assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit to deepen our understanding of Revelation and the faith of the Catholic Church. For those who believe, we can grow in the knowledge and experience of the reality of God through faith as well as through prayer and grace. For this reason we turn to the Church and take part in the life of the Church. The fullness of Revelation is reflected in the life and teaching of the Catholic Church. In her is found the fullness of the means of salvation.

‘The sole Church of Christ, which . . . we profess to be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, . . . subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him. Nevertheless, many elements of sanctification and of truth are found outside its visible confines’ [Vatican II, *Constitution on the Church*, no. 8].

—CCC, no. 870

Reason and experience can also teach us to accept the word of other believers. Some ‘doubters’ claim this pursuit leads to a dead end. They claim there is a real discrepancy, almost a separation, between faith and reason. But there is no such discrepancy. All truth is from God, who is Truth. The psalmist reminds us, ‘[The] sum of your word is truth; / and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever’ (Psalm 119:160).

There is no contradiction between the truths of faith revealed by God and those truths, such as scientific truths, we discover by reason. Trusting in God and assenting to and living by the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. The gift of faith enhances the ability of human reason to come to know

the truth. God desires more for us than leaving us on our own to come to know him. He has freely revealed himself and those mysteries of faith that we could never come to know about God on our own. He has also revealed to us truths that we can come to know on our own so that we can know them with more assurance and certainty.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

Benjamin Franklin (1706–90) once remarked, ‘The way to see by Faith is to shut the Eye of Reason.’

- ⊗ How does Catholic teaching on faith differ from Franklin’s view?
- ⊗ What arguments would you make if you were discussing the relationship between faith and reason with Franklin, or anyone who viewed faith and reason as he did?



SALVATOR MUNDI | BENEDETTO DIANA

Faith and discipleship

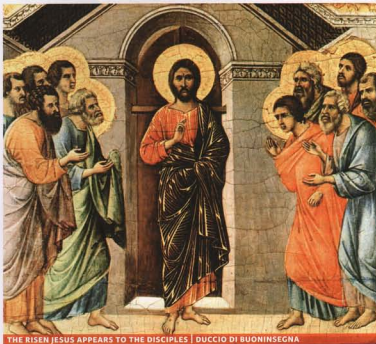
The risen Lord invited his disciples to faith, saying, 'Believe in God, believe also in me' (John 14:1). For a Christian, believing in God cannot be separated from believing in the One whom he sent, his beloved Son, whom the Father tells us to listen to and obey (see Mark 1:11). The risen Jesus is present with us and continues to invite people to faith. Through his Church, he invites all people to believe and trust in him and in all that he has revealed about God and about ourselves.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- What are some of the challenges the Catholic Church faces as she invites members of the Church to a deeper faith in Christ?
- What are some of the obstacles that young people face when they seek to carry out the command to 'believe in God'?
- How can young people come to know God through Jesus?

THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST: THE HEART OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND DISCIPLESHIP

The risen Lord invites us to faith in him, who died and rose from the dead to save us from our sins and to restore us to life with God. This invitation to faith is also an invitation to discipleship. The English word 'disciple' comes from the Greek word *mathetes*, which means 'an apprentice', 'learner' or 'pupil'. Taking the meaning of 'disciple' to be that of 'an apprentice' helps us realize that becoming and being a disciple of Jesus Christ takes time—it is a lifelong process. Apprentices of Christ need time to learn, to understand and to grow in faith.



THE RISEN JESUS APPEARS TO THE DISCIPLES | DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA

We are members of the **Body of Christ**, of which Christ is the Head. (Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–26.) We grow in faith and live as disciples of Jesus Christ with other members of the Church. To be a disciple of Christ means walking in faith as a member of the community of Jesus' apprentices—the Church on earth—in the midst of the world. We cannot make this journey alone. 'No one can believe alone, just as no one can live alone. . . . The believer has received faith from others and should hand it on to others. . . . Each believer is thus a link in the great chain of believers. I cannot believe without being carried by the faith of others, and by my faith I help support others in the faith' (CCC, no. 166).

As apprentices of Christ we join with other apprentices and learn from the Master. Receiving the Seven **Sacraments**, especially Eucharist and Penance, regularly, and active participation in the life of the Church, is essential to living a life



The prayers, good works and example of other disciples support us as we undertake our lifelong journey of faith

of faith as a disciple of Jesus. The prayers, good works and example of other disciples support us as we undertake our lifelong journey of faith and strive to base our whole lifestyle on the truths that Jesus taught by his every word and deed. We need to grow in our knowledge and understanding of those truths and in our commitment to God's Word, passed on to us through Scripture and **Tradition**.

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- ① Page through the **Sermon on the Mount** in Matthew 5:1—7:29. Draw up a list of words or phrases you discover that capture Jesus' description of the life and work of his disciples.
- ② Create a 'Values Triangle' that illustrates the words and phrases according to how you

perceive their importance for the life of a disciple of Christ. On the top of your triangle place the word or phrase that captures what is, at this moment in your life of faith, *most* important to you. Then place the other words and phrases in descending order.

- ③ Share your 'Values Triangle' with a friend. Talk about how it influences the decisions you make to live your faith in Jesus Christ.

WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY?

- ① What do you find to be the most difficult challenge or challenges to living your life as a disciple of Jesus Christ?
- ② How does being a member of the Catholic Church support you in living your faith in Jesus Christ?

Living our faith in Christ

Zacchaeus the tax collector encountered Jesus and came to faith in him. Read Luke 19:1–10. Pay attention to how Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus transformed his life.

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- ① Form into three groups. Group 1 describes how Zacchaeus is thinking at different stages in the story. Group 2 describes how Zacchaeus is feeling. Group 3 describes how Zacchaeus acts.
- ② Each small group reports back to the class and contributes to the understanding of the encounter between Zacchaeus and Jesus.

FAITH IN CHRIST INVOLVES THE WHOLE PERSON

We give authentic witness to our faith in God when we strive to love God with all our strength, heart and mind, and our neighbor as ourselves. All the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew's, Mark's

and Luke's accounts of the Gospel) add 'with all your soul'. (See Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30 and Luke 10:27.) What is the significance of including 'soul'? In the New Testament the term used for soul is *psychē*, which refers to one's whole being. The gift of faith invites a disciple of Christ to engage one's whole person—one's *head* (all of one's thinking, deciding and judging), one's *heart* (all of one's feelings and desires and choosing), and one's *hands* (all of one's deeds and words).

FROM THE CATECHISM

Faith is a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words.

—CCC, no. 176

Living our Catholic faith is a 'way of the head': The 'head' refers to the human gift of our intellect, our God-given ability for knowing and understanding



JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS | NIELS LARSEN STEVNS

things, for exploring the mystery of God, one's self and all of creation. The gift of faith invites and welcomes us to use our intellect. Human reason and the gift of faith, as we have already seen, are complementary partners. The faith of the Catholic Church is a most 'reasonable' faith; it is 'credible' and makes good sense. The Catholic Church encourages investigation and inquiry; she encourages people to join with her to make sense of the Faith for themselves and to share that faith with others.

Read Luke 24:13–33, the account of the encounter of two of the disciples of Jesus with the risen Lord on the road to Emmaus on the morning of the Resurrection. It is a story about people's eyes being opened. The risen Lord engages the disciples, whose faith in him seems to have weakened, in conversation about their lives and their disappointment. He 'instructs' them in the whole tradition of their people, especially the writings of the Prophets that foretold the coming of the **Messiah**. Notice how the risen Christ waits and gives his two discouraged disciples time to recognize him and to renew and deepen their faith and hope. **Hope** is the third Theological Virtue. Through the virtue of hope a person 'both desires and expects the fulfillment of God's promises of things to come' (USCCA, 515). With their faith and hope renewed, the two disciples rush off back to Jerusalem, eager to share their experiences with the other disciples.



ROAD TO EMMAUS | 15TH-CENTURY FRESCO, MOMO, ITALY

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- ① Why do you think the faith of the disciples who were travelling on the road to Emmaus had been weakened?
- ② Brainstorm with a partner a list of questions that a person today might ask about the Catholic faith.
- ③ Seek answers to your questions during this and future theology courses.

Living our Catholic faith is a 'way of the heart':

God's invitation to faith also engages our heart. The 'heart' refers to the use of our God-given gift of free will. 'By free will one shapes one's life. Human freedom is a force for growth and maturity in truth and goodness; it attains its perfection when directed toward God, our beatitude. . . . The more one does what is good; the freer one becomes' (CCC, nos. 1731 and 1733).

This goes to what William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), the Nobel Prize winning dramatist, author and poet, described as the 'deep heart's core' of a person. Living a life of faith as a disciple of Christ includes a deep *willingness* to believe and trust in Jesus Christ and in what he has taught about the Triune God, about ourselves and about how we are to live. The Latin word *fidere*, which is the root of the English word 'faith', means 'to trust'. To have faith in God includes placing our trust in and freely giving our heart to God, who is love, goodness, faithfulness and truth. Such faith includes being aware of where our heart is. Such faith is inseparably connected with the Theological Virtue of charity, or love. Following our heart can prompt us either to choose to live out our faith in Christ or to choose not to live our faith in Christ. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus reminded his disciples:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for

yourself treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

—Matthew 6:19–21

God has created every person with a free will, with the power to choose what we know is good and to love God and others and ourselves. Our God-given **moral passions** (emotions and feelings) can incline our heart to choose to do what we know is good or to choose to do what we know is evil. For example, we can respond to our feelings of anger by seeking revenge when we are bullied or treated unjustly, or we can respond by working alone or with others to correct the harm caused by such behavior. The Holy Spirit gives us the grace to learn from Jesus and to use our anger, compassion and other passions as Jesus did. The Holy Spirit gives us the

grace to respond with our heart and live our faith by both our words and our deeds.

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- ⊙ Share an example of a situation that drew a response from your heart.
- ⊙ What did your response reveal to you about what you treasured?
- ⊙ How did your response give witness to your faith in Jesus?

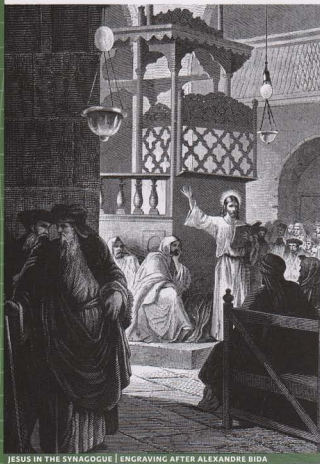
Living our Catholic faith is a 'way of the hands': The symbol of hands points to the lived commitment of a disciple of Jesus Christ. The way of the hands is about 'walking by faith' and living out in our lives the new commandment of love (charity) that Jesus taught and commanded us to live. (Read John 13:31–35; see also Matthew 22:34–40 and 1 John 2:7–17.) Charity (love) is one of the three Theological Virtues that enables us to love as God created us to love. It is the 'theological virtue by which we love God above all things for his own sake, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God' (CCC, Glossary; see also CCC, no. 1822).

When Jesus began his public life and ministry, he proclaimed the 'way of the hands'. He lived a life revealing the love of God for all, especially the poor and the vulnerable, thereby fulfilling the work his Father had sent him to do. In the synagogue of Nazareth he declared:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the
captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

—Luke 4:18–19

Fulfilling these 'works of the Messiah' became a defining characteristic of the public life and ministry of Jesus. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, consoled the troubled, forgave sinners and welcomed all to discipleship. The **Works of Mercy**, as enumerated in the Beatitudes and the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, are the work of our hands.



JESUS IN THE SYNAGOGUE | ENGRAVING AFTER ALEXANDRE BIDA

Our relationship with God requires open and honest 'communication' if it is to grow and flourish

THINK, PAIR AND SHARE

- Open your Bible and page through the four accounts of the Gospel. Identify examples of Jesus fulfilling the works he announced in Luke 4:18–19.
- Discuss with a partner how you see this work being carried out in your school or parish.

OVER TO YOU

- How are you using your 'hands' to live as a disciple of Jesus? How might you roll up your sleeves and do better?

FAITH, PRAYER AND WORSHIP

Following the example of Jesus, the life of a disciple is a life of **prayer**. Together with Christ, Christians lift up our hearts to God in prayer. Jesus prayed (see Mark 1:35, 6:46; Luke 5:16) and taught us to pray (see Matthew 7:7–11, Luke 11:5–13, 18:1–8). Our relationship with God, like all relationships, requires open and honest 'communication' if it is to grow and flourish. Through our prayer and worship we communicate with God. Through this communication, which itself is a gift that is always initiated by God, we grow in faith, hope and love.

The Eucharist is the summit of the Church's **Liturgy** and life of prayer. All **worship** and prayer flow from the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Church also prays the **Liturgy of the Hours** every day throughout the world. The Liturgy of the Hours is the official daily public prayer of the Church. Praying the Liturgy of the Hours extends the praise given to God in the Eucharist throughout the day. The hours of the day form



the structure of the Liturgy of the Hours, hence its name. These 'hours' include the Office of Readings, Morning Prayer, Midmorning Prayer, Midday Prayer, Midafternoon Prayer, Evening Prayer and Night Prayer. The **clergy** (bishops, priests and deacons) and members of the **consecrated life** (members of religious communities) have traditionally had the responsibility to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. Today, an increasing number of laypeople pray the Liturgy of the Hours every day. (We will explore Christian prayer in more detail in chapter 12, 'New Life in Christ', of this text.)

OVER TO YOU

- When do you pray?
- What helps you to pray?
- Share your experience of a time when you felt God's presence with you during your prayer.

JOURNAL EXERCISE

- What wisdom for your life of faith as a disciple of Christ did you learn from your study of this section of the chapter?
- How will you make this wisdom part of your life?

JUDGE AND ACT

REVIEW WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNED

Look back over this chapter and reflect on what it means to be a person of faith. Discuss the teaching of the Catholic Church on these statements:

- ⊙ Faith is one of the three Theological Virtues.
- ⊙ Faith is a response to God's self-Revelation and is necessary for salvation.
- ⊙ Faith is a personal act; it is the adherence of the whole person to God.
- ⊙ We come to faith in the community of the Church and not by ourselves alone.
- ⊙ Faith in Christ leads to discipleship and has practical implications for daily life and for one's relationship with Christ.

WHAT ABOUT YOU PERSONALLY?

- ⊙ What wisdom and insight did you gain from your study of this chapter about God's invitation to you to come to know him, to

believe in him and to live in communion with him?

- ⊙ What might that mean for your faith journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

OUR RESPONSE TO JESUS' INVITATION TO FAITH IN HIM

Throughout his life Jesus *invited* people, 'Come, follow me', and welcomed a free response. Recall for a moment the incident in John's Gospel in which many of Jesus' first disciples were leaving his company because they found what he was teaching to be too challenging. Turning to the Apostles, Jesus asked, 'Do you also wish to go away?' In other words, even **the Twelve** were free to stay or go. (Read the whole story in John 6:60–71.) An uncountable number of Christians since then have chosen, as the Apostles did, to stay and believe in Jesus and to share that faith with others.

LEARN BY EXAMPLE

A story of faith in Christ in action

A catechist shares a story about the power of faith.

Birute was one of my translators for a two-week series of presentations throughout Lithuania in June 1992. The Soviets were not long gone and Lithuanians were still in the euphoria of liberation. Birute was a graceful woman with a deep peace about her. Her long auburn hair was beginning to gray, and her sad eyes reflected much suffering.

As we traveled the country, we had time to swap stories and we became friends. Birute told about the Soviet invasion of Lithuania in 1940 and the terrible persecutions that ensued. She described the particular cruelty toward people who practiced their faith. The Communists executed thousands of Church leaders and sent almost a million Lithuanians into exile and likely death in Siberia. And yet



the deep Catholic faith of the Lithuanian people not only survived but thrived, as if strengthened by suffering and resistance to state-sponsored atheism.

In one of my sessions, a participant shared her childhood memory of parents pushing

her through a back bedroom window when that ominous knock on the door was heard. She told of running through the fields in the dark of a neighbor's house and returning next morning to find her homestead razed and her parents gone, never to be seen again. Years later, she learned they had died in Siberia. Lithuania is full of such stories.

I asked Birute how she and the Lithuanian people endured it all. Without hesitating she said, 'Our faith saved us.' I probed, 'But did you not feel abandoned by God?' She said, 'Never! Instead, we came to understand what the Cross really means for Christian faith—not that God sends suffering, but that God suffers alongside us when it comes.'

REFLECT AND DISCERN

- ① What do you think Birute meant by the phrase 'Our faith saved us'? According to this account, how were the Lithuanian people saved by their faith?
- ② Who do you know with this sort of faith? How did they come to have it and how does it impact their lives?

SHARE YOUR FAITH WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- ① Discuss with family and friends how faith impacts your lives. Share examples.

- ② Suggest how you can support one another in living your faith, in 'walking your talk'.
- ③ Who supports you in living your faith?
- ④ Who can you support?

JUDGE AND ACT

- ① How will you live your faith at home, in school, at church or with your friends?
- ② How far would you be prepared to go to defend your faith?



LEARN BY EXAMPLE

[F]aith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

ROMANS 10:17

PRAYER REFLECTION

Pray the Sign of the Cross together.

LEADER

Take some deep breaths and begin to listen to the sounds far away in the distance. Try not to think about these sounds, just hear them. *(Pause)* Listen to the sounds in this room. *(Pause)* Listen to the sounds inside yourself . . . your breathing, in and out. *(Pause)*

Now imagine yourself in your favorite place, somewhere you really like and feel good in, a place that brings you peace. Imagine you are with Jesus, who is a friend of yours. Notice what he looks like and how you feel about being with him. *(Pause)*

Now imagine him looking at you and asking you to tell him, honestly, what is the most important conviction in your life. . . . Think for a moment and then answer him, telling him why you deeply believe this. *(Pause)*

What is Jesus' response to you? Now just be silent for a moment. *(Pause)*

Finally, think about whether there are any implications or decisions you need to make because of what passed between yourself and Jesus. *(Pause)*

Breathing slowly and deeply, come back to the room.

ALL

Gracious God,
we thank you for the gift of faith.
Send us the Holy Spirit
to help us grow in our Christian faith by living as
disciples of Jesus,
and to be open to learning from the world around
us and from you.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Pray the Sign of the Cross together.

**Imagine Jesus looking at
you and asking you to
tell him, honestly, what
is the most important
conviction in your life**



